

V. *An Explanation of the new Chronological Table of the CHINESE HISTORY, translated into Latin from the Original Chinese\**, by Father Johannes Franciscus Foucquet, Soc. Jesh. Bishop of Eleutheropolis, and published at Rome in the Year 1730. Collected from two Accounts thereof, written in French, one sent from Rome by Sir Tho. Dereham, Bar<sup>t</sup>. to the Royal Society, the other sent from Father Foucquet to Father Eustache Guillemeau, a Barnabite at Paris, and by him transmitted to Sir Hans Sloane, Bar<sup>t</sup>. Pr. R. S.

THERE have been spread in *Europe* divers Opinions concerning the *Chinese* Antiquity, which are very false, nay some very absurd. I place in the first Rank of these false and absurd Opinions that which traces back the Origin of the *Chinese* Nation beyond our Account of the Creation of the World; likewise others which would fain place the Beginnings of the *Chinese* Empire before the Deluge. Such *Chimeras* deserve not the Pains of refuting. They are equally repugnant to good Sense, the Rules of Criticism, and to Religion.

There are some more moderate Opinions, which bring nearer to us the Beginnings of the *Chinese* Monarchy: these may be reduced to three.

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\* One of the Original Chinese Tables printed at Canton, was presented to the Society by Sir Tho. Dereham, and is now deposited in their Library.

The first places these Beginnings under one *Fou hi*, whom it makes reign 2952 Years before *Jesus Christ*.

The second places them under one *Hoang Ti*, 2697 Years before the vulgar *Æra*.

The third in fine puts them under one *Tao*, 2357 Years before the Birth of our Saviour.

This *Fou hi*, this *Hoang Ti*, and this *Tao*, who are supposed to have been so many *Chinese* Princes, are mysterious Names of heroick Persons, who never were in *China* : this is elsewhere demonstrated. Wherefore these Opinions, though they appear less fabulous, are not less remote from Truth.

It is manifest, that not one of these Opinions can be made agree with the vulgar Translation of the Bible. Recourse must be had to the Septuagint, which indeed would be no Inconveniency ; seeing the Numbers of the Vulgate and those of the Septuagint are equally current in the Church.

But to speak in general, these various Opinions make the Epoque of the *Chinese* History remount higher than is true. Their Diversity already gives room to perceive their Incertainty, and how little Solidity there is in the Foundations, whereon each of them stands.

The Author of certain Memoirs on *China*, that have made some Noise in the World, declaring for the Chronology, which fixes the true Epoque of the *Chinese* History at *Tao*, has not feared to advance, on this Chronology, these five Propositions.

1. That it is very much followed, and hath many Circumstances to support it.

2. That it is not fabulous in its Beginnings, as that of the *Romans* and *Grecians*.

3. That it is established on many Observations of Eclipses, which are marked therein, and are found very conformable to the Astronomical Calculations of the most learned Astronomers of the later Times.

4. That all the Parts of the ancient *Chinese* History have been writ by Authors contemporary with the Kings, whose Lives they have left us.

5. That *Confucius*, whose Authority ought to be of great Weight on account of his Probity and Virtue, never called this Chronology in Doubt, but always supposed it very true.

The Author of the Memoirs has but copied after other Writers more ancient than himself. A Reader who has never been out of *Europe*, and sees those Things affirmed with so much Confidence, thinks there is no Reason to doubt of them. Thus has the Fable been introduced without Opposition, by Degrees it gained the Ascendant, and is so established at this Day, that one scarce dares attack it.

Nevertheless the following Propositions are indubitable, and contradictory to the five Propositions just now cited.

1. The Chronology in question is made up of Parts ill linked together, and that have no Connection; and abounds with absurd Contradictions.

2. It is entirely fabulous in its Beginnings and Progress; entirely fabulous in its Principles, and in the Consequences drawn from thence.

3. It is not built on any Observation of Eclipses: The Eclipses marked therein, and the other Astronomical Characters by which the Author would fain establish it, are contradicted by the Tables and Calculations of the most learned Astronomers of these later Times.

4. The ancient Kings, whose Lives he pretends to have, are esteemed in *China* truly chimerical Men : These pretended Lives have not been writ by contemporary Authors.

The Chronicle, which contains this Texture of Fictions, is the Work of a Person named *Se ma Tſien*, who was born 146 Years before the vulgar *Æra*, viz. more than 2000 Years after the Time wherein *Yao* is placed, who is made first Emperor. If some Authors can be quoted for Warrantees of what this *Se ma Tſien* advances, they were modern to the Time when he wrote : these Authors oppose each other : the Style of some of them is infinitely obscure ; and in the Bottom *Se ma Tſien*, as he himself acknowledges, had nought for the principal Ground-work of his nauseous Chronicle, but miserable Rhapsodies collected at Hazard, or popular Traditions which he had gathered, without understanding them, as he rambled over some Provinces. This Work is in most Points contradicted by the *Kings* \*, a Book truly ancient, and of great Authority.

5. In fine, there is nothing that is certainly of *Confucius* to serve as Proof for a Chronology manifestly imaginary. It no where appears that he had ever examined it. This Philosopher has left nothing in Writing ; for it is not worth while to reckon a small Chapter of a few Lines, which is ascribed to him without giving good Reasons why, and is in the Front of a Book entitled, *Ta bio*, or Great Doctrine. All the rest that goes under the Name of *Confucius*, is read in modern Treatises, where he is made to speak ; Treatises which appeared in the World many Ages after the Death of this

\* Kang mou.

this Philosopher, and of Consequence Apocryphal, suspected, and for the most Part rejected by the most able of the *Chinese*, and full of Circumstances which these learned Men deny, or at least call in Doubt. Moreover, if these Treatises deserve any Credit, some Things are found therein, even under *Confucius's* Name, which quite overturn the chronological System of *Se ma Tsen*. Are these Titles to be boasted of as Testimonies of *Confucius* in Favour of a Chronology, on which, there is just Reason to believe, he never so much as thought ?

Notwithstanding so many evident Proofs of a palpable Falshood, this Chronology of *Se ma Tsen* is at this Day received in *China*. It was at first neglected there: but Error insensibly prevailed. The Multitude among the *Chinese*, as among us, easily embraces the most groundless Opinions a great Name imposes. *Se ma Tsen* had the Employ of Historiographer of the Empire: He was the only Person that could be followed then. He soothed the Nations Pride, making not only its Origin, but even the Beginnings of its Monarchy ascend backward to very remote Antiquity. He annoblized it by a Croud of Heroes, to whom he gave Birth in its Bosom: He enriched it by an Infinity of Incidents, invented it is true, but such as were deemed instructive and glorious to the *Chinese* Name. After the Loss of the Libraries burnt under *Chi hoang*, there was not more than an Age elapsed when he composed this History: such a Work was a sort of Consolation: It was regarded as a Treasure: Men ran eagerly after a Book that seemed to present such fine Things: Its Stile was pleasing, being Laconic and strong: It was read then, and in  
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reading believed without much Examination, because there was Pleasure found in giving Credit to it.

Thus did the agreeable Poison insinuate itself: The very Learned, or those who thought themselves such, were infected thereby. But *China* has its Critics as well as we: There are some of them clear-sighted enough to discern Fictions, and firm enough not to give themselves blindly up to the most propagated Errors.

Several in after Times opposed *Se ma Tfen*, taxed him with excessive Credulity, and reproached him for his monstrous Over-sight. Nay, some laying aside his Authority, have boldly abridged the Times, and fixed the true Epoque of their History at a small Number of Centuries before *Jesus Christ*. Among these is the Compiler of a new Chronological Table of the *Chinese* History, which has lately appeared here in *Latin* on a large Sheet of Paper. It is a Translation published by Father *Fouquet*, *Soc. Jes.* the present Bishop of *Eleutheropolis*, who hath lived near twenty-three Years in *China*. The *Chinese* Original from which the Translation was made, is owing to the learned *Nien hi yao*, a *Tartar*, illustrious by Birth and Merit, and Viceroy of *Canton* in the Year 1724\*: For the *Tartars*, since their Conquest of *China*, are become well versed in Sciences, and especially in the History of the Empire they conquered.

Yet this Gentleman is not the Author of the Chronological System he has here drawn up. He himself tells

\* His Father possessed the like Post, and in the Year 1722. his Brother was Tsong Tou of two Provinces, a more considerable and more important Employ than that of Viceroy.

tells us, he has taken it from the most valued historical Work in his Country\*. What renders this Writer Praise-worthy, is his ranging his System in a beautiful Order, which gives an extream Facility of seeing at first Sight the Series of the Dynasties, or Imperial Houses, the Names and Succession of the Emperors, the Beginning, End and Duration of each of their Reigns.

However, this is not the only Advantage of this new Table: The ancient Chronology of *China* is therein reduced to its true Beginnings. The most remote Epoque of this Chronology, according to *Nien hi yao*, does not surpass the first Year of a Prince called *Guei lie wang*, who began his Reign 424 Years before the vulgar Æra. Some there are, who think this Epoque might still be brought nearer to us; not to fix there the Origin of the Nation, which, for strong Reasons, may be traced back to Time near the Deluge; but because from much later Date only, doth any Certainty appear, of whatever is pretended to have befallen this famous People. † *Se ma quang* and *Tchu bi*, the two gravest Historians *China* has produced, were of this Opinion. The first flourished in the Year of *Christ* 1061, ‡ the second about the End of the twelfth Century. They have both omitted whatever is before the Time of *Guei lie wang*, nor would they mention ought of it in their Histories: Nay, they have not begun them till the twenty-third Year of *Guei*

\* *China is now the Country of these Tartars who were born there since the Conquest, that is about ninety Years since.*

† *Se ma wen, or Sema wen Kong.*

‡ *Sæculo 11<sup>o</sup>. vel 12<sup>o</sup>. Sæculo 13<sup>o</sup>.*

*Guei lie wang*, somewhat later than *Nien hi yao*, who begins with the first of this Prince's Reign. It is on the Example and Authority of these two illustrious Philosophers that *Nien hi yao* has relied in suppressing what precedes.

By fixing this Epoque at *Guei lie wang*, fabulous Times, and a thousand Errors and Absurdities current in *Europe* concerning three Imperial (absolutely imaginary) Families, and reigns anterior to, but no less chimerical than these Families, are retrenched. These Errors will soon vanish of their own accord; so that the Subject of so much laborious, but useless Lucubration and Study, will at length cease: a worthy Motive for congratulating the learned World.

This is not all; we are still particularly obliged to the ingenious *Tartar*, for having found Means to place in his Table the Cycle of sixty Years, called *Kia Tse*, so much esteemed by the *Chinese*, that it is as the Soul, Link and Foundation of their whole Chronology: a Point which requires Explanation.

The *Chinese* are not acquainted with our Olympiads; but from Time out of Mind they have used this Period of sixty Years, which is of as great Service at least as the Olympiads, or the most celebrated Periods among the *Greeks*.

As we mark the Incidents of ancient History by the Years of the Olympiads, so the *Chinese* mark what has happened in their Country by the Years of this Revolution. Our Chronologers say, for Example, that the *Peloponnesian* War began the first Year of the twenty-seventh Olympiad; that *Alexander* was born the first Year of the one hundred and sixth. According to the *Chinese*, the Prince under whom  
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the great Wall \* was finished, began his Reign the fifty-second Year of a Cycle, which is found to be the fourth in this chronological Table, reckoning from the Cycle of the general Epoque inclusively. This general Epoque, as has been already said, is the first Year of *Guei lei wang* †.

Now as the Years of the Olympiads had no proper or peculiar Names, they were distinguished only by their Order of first, second, third and fourth: But every Year of the *Chinese* Cycle is marked by two Letters, which make up its proper Character, and distinguish it from the other fifty-nine. Thus the first Year is called (1) ‡ *Kia Tse*, and gives its Name to the whole Cycle. Thus the fifty-second Year of the fourth Cycle, in which the Prince, who finished the great Wall, began his Reign, is called (2) *y mao*. This Prince, after bloody Wars, became Monarch of *China*; and then abandoning himself to such impious Pride, as the Philosophers reproached him with, caused himself to be called (3) *Chi hoang Ti*, as much as to say, *the first Master, the first Emperor reigning of himself*; for this is the real Signification of these Characters well analysed; and those glorious Titles belong to G O D alone in the ancient Monuments. This unheard-of Usurpation happened in the twenty-sixth Year of his Reign, which is the seventeenth of the fifth Cycle, and is there called (4) *Keng Chin*.

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\* This great Wall justly passes for one of the Wonders of the World, beginning at the Eastern Sea, and extending to near Thibet, above four hundred and fifty French Leagues.

† The Method of finding this Epoque on the Table is given hereafter.

‡ Vid. Tab. III. Fig. 1, &c.

It is thus that all the Years of the Emperors, for above two thousand Years, have Names in History common to them with the corresponding Years of the Cycle: and these Names common to both, are a Sort of Link which unites the Years of the Emperors to the Cycle, and thereby prevents Confusion. Hence we see how the Cycle among the *Chinese* is the Knot and Basis of all their Chronology.

Here a Question naturally arises, concerning the Signification of these Characteristics, which distinguish the Years of the Cycle and Emperors: for it must be pleasing to the Reader to dive into their true Sense.

It is to be wished it were as easy to answer this Question as it is natural to propose it: But it regards Characters so infinitely different from ours, that their Nature or Origin have never been well extricated; nor has there been any Principle hitherto established for their Explanation. Wherefore to endeavour now to penetrate their primitive Signification, would be the same thing as to attempt walking without a Light in an unknown dangerous Road, in a dark Night. Yet since an Answer must be given, to lead the Reader by Degrees to the Knowledge of so new a Subject,

We must remark, *First*, That it is not possible to give these Names any Translation. *Kia Tse* will still be *Kia Tse* in all Languages; *y mao* will still be *y mao*; *Keng chin*, *Keng chin*, and so the other fifty-seven Names: and this no *European* that understands the *Chinese* Tongue will contradict.

*Secondly*, That these Names are composed of two Sorts of Characters\* very famous among the *Chinese*, who

\* See the Characters in the Plate annexed, Tab. III.

who get them by Heart in their Youth, and employ them on a thousand Occasions. These of the first Sort are ten in Number, and are called the *Year-Letters* ; these of the second, twelve, and are named *Hour-Letters*.

*Thirdly*, That these two Sorts of Characters are combined, by repeating the ten *Year-Letters* six times, and the twelve *Hour-Letters* but five times ; for six times ten, and five times twelve equally make sixty : and from this Combination result sixty Names for the sixty Years that compose the Cycle.

These three Points well comprehended suffice for the Use and understanding of the chronological Table : and the Reader would do well to stop here.

It may be objected by some, that this Erudition is unpleasant, because it enlightens not the Understanding ; the Names remain unintelligible, and the Reader's Curiosity is not satisfied. But will it be more so, by adding what the *Chinese* take out of their Traditions?

I pass by the Abuse made of these twenty-two Letters by judiciary Astrologers. It is a Subject apart that would carry one too far : Wherefore I shall keep within the Bounds of what the *Chinese* hold, and give for most authentic.

They pretend that these twenty-two Letters were invented by a very ancient King, whom they name (5) *Hoang Ti*, in order to determine the Beginning, Progress, End, and successive Periods of a great Year ; for they have one which includes a certain Number of Ages, though its total Duration be no where distinctly marked.

They say the great Year is successively at *Kia*, at *y*, and at *Ping*.

Now it is no easy Matter to determine the Extent of these different Parts of the great Period (for there is room to conjecture that they are unequal) how long, for Example, lasts that which commences at (6) *Kia*, that at (7) *y*, and so of the rest; nay, it is perhaps impossible, for want of certain Principles, the Knowledge of which is entirely lost.

When the Year was at *Kia*, which seems to signify when it began, this Point of Time, according to Tradition, is called (8) *O fong*; when it was at *y*, this is called (9) *Tcheou Mong*; when at (10) *Ping*, the Name given to it was (11) *Jeou Tchao*.

Every one of the other nineteen Letters has in this manner a Word for its Device; but as it is plain, that all these Words are very strange to *European* Ears, and that those which remain are as obscure and barbarous as *Kia Tse*, *Y mao*, *Keng chin*, it is best to omit mentioning them.

Nevertheless one should not easily believe that these Words are void of all Meaning, or that the Letters, whose Names they are, are Figures made at Hazard, or arbitrarily imagined. The Inventor of these Names must have proposed himself some End.

It is already known in general, and is demonstrated elsewhere, that the Characters preserved by the *Chinese*, but much more ancient than them, are true Hieroglyphics.

It is likewise known, and strongly demonstrated, that the Doctrine veiled under the Appearance of these Hieroglyphics, is very mysterious and sublime: and it is

unreasonable to regard as Nonsense, and reject such as we understand not, purely because we do not understand them.

And indeed when we closely examine the twenty-two Letters in question, we perceive in several of them somewhat very mysterious, which the *Chinese* themselves present us with without understanding them, For Example, (12) *Tse*, the first of the *Hour-Letters*, signifies with the *Chinese* both the Moment of Midnight and a tender Babe just born (wrapt up in his Baby-Cloaths.) *Ou*, the seventh of the *Hour-Letters*, signifies the Moment of Noon, and a Man lifted on a Cross. This Letter signifies Noon, according to the Primitive Meaning, which still subsists without ever having been disused. It also signifies a Man lifted on a Cross, as is evident to the Eye of any Person, who has the first Tincture of the Characters. I know some Difficulty may be raised on this Point, but it shall be resolved in its proper Place.

Where have this People got such Ideas? They are incomprehensible to them at present, and yet (it is strange) they preserve them preciously, and use their utmost Endeavours to find out the Sense of them, but to no Purpose.

That *Tse* signifies both Midnight and an Infant just come to the World; that *Ou* marks Noon and a Man lifted on a Cross, are Facts cited as they are found in the *Chinese* Vocabularies, without Comments, Conjectures, or any other of ones private Thoughts; which should be the more surprising to the Reader.

It will encrease the Surprise to reflect on a *Chinese* Axiom, the Sense whereof is, that the Heavens opened at the Hour of *Tse*, which, according to the foregoing Exposition, ought to be understood of the Moment of Midnight.

And in order to raise the Admiration a Degree higher, *Tse*, which signifies an Infant, is literally and properly used to signify *Son*. Now let the Reader give Attention to the surprising Words of a *Chinese* Writer on this Son.

“(13) The first Infant, says he, of the Production of Things, their Principle and Origin came from the Son. The Son is the Cause by which all Things had a Beginning.

When the Year is at (12) *Tse*, that is called (14) *Kouen Tun*. This *Kouen*, in the common Acceptation, signifies Work, Pain, Grief. *Tun* signifies being reduced to great Anguish. The Application of these Words to the tender Babe, to the Son lately born, produces a Meaning, which by being too intelligible and too beautiful, raises Wonder.

When the Year is at *Ou*, it is called (15) *Tun Tchang*. We have seen that *Tun* signifies Anguish, Affliction. To have the true Signification of *Tchang*, Recourse must be had to the Analysis, as on infinite other Occasions.

The Analysis gives (16) *Yang*, the Emblem of a Lamb, and (17) *Tchang*, which signifies to divide, to pierce. Thus at the Hour of Noon, marked by (18) *ou*, that is, a Man on a Cross, the Lamb was pierced.

If the Reader is struck with these Ideas, new to him as they must be, let him not attribute his Surprise to the Writer hereof, seeing it was the Obligation of answering the Objection above-mentioned that urged him thereto.

But let us drop this Subject, too fruitful in Paradoxes. What has been alledged is sufficient to verify a Word in the *Latin* Instructions at the Head of the Chronological Table, *viz.* that the Characters <sup>which</sup> by their Combination form the Cycle, are very profound. To enter upon the Explanation of the rest, would lead us into new Depths, the Discussion whereof would require long and critical Dissertations. It is well the understanding these Mysteries is of no Service to the Use of the Table in Hand. Wherefore let us return to the Cycle itself, such as it is at present in the Hands of the *Chinese*.

This so useful Cycle, which in the printed History is a certain Rule to fix Time, the ingenious *Tartar* has disposed in his Table with such Art as renders the Relation of the Years of the Cycle to the Years of the Emperors very sensible ; whence spring great Advantages that are very visible to whoever attentively considers the Table, and penetrates into its Arrangement.

In the Front of the Table appears a Line writ in Capital Letters, and extend s Horizontally from Right to Left : This Line contains, according to the Order of their Succession, the Names of twenty-one Dynasties, or Imperial Families, who have reigned since four Centuries before *Jesus Christ* unto this Time.

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These Names placed exactly on the Lines, where are the Beginnings of the Dynasties to which they belong, are as sure Guides for easily finding them, and under the Direction whereof one comes without Difficulty to the Knowledge of the Emperors of these Imperial Families, as well as the Incidents of their Reigns.

This Cycle is placed in the Middle, in a perpendicular Line or Column, which extends from the Top to the Bottom of the Table, and is divided into sixty little Lodges or square *Area's*, every one of which answers a Year of the Cycle, and contains the Name of the Year it answers. The Angles, or empty Spaces which surround the Name in each of these Lodges, were coloured black, that the whole may the more readily strike the Reader's Eye, and be the more easily distinguished.

On the Right and Left of the Cycle thus placed are ranged twenty other Columns, divided into sixty Lodges each, in the same manner as the Cycle; and consequently equal to the Cycle to which they are parallel.

It is in the Lodges of these Columns parallel to the Cycle, that the Years of the Emperors are disposed in their natural Order for above two thousand Years. They are disposed from Top to Bottom, from the Right to the Left, after the *Chinese* Custom; but to avoid Mistake, I mean the Right and Left to the Person who reads the Table. And it is essential to remark, that the Arrangement is such, that each of these Imperial Years referred to the Column of the Cycle by an horizontal Line which falls at  
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right Angles on this Column, answers the Year of the same Cycle, whose Name it bears in History\*.

Pursuant to this Explanation, the first Year of the Prince named *Guei lie wang*, at which begins the Table, whereof that is the Epoque, will be found in the first Column at the right Hand, pretty near the Bottom, under the Author's small Preface; and opposite to the fifty-third Year of the Cycle called (19) *Pin chin*; because in History this first Year of *Guei lie wang* has the two Letters *Ping chin* for its Characteristic.

The Reason why this first Year of *Guei lie wang* is taken for the general Epoque of the whole Table, is, because there is neither Clearness nor Certainty in the History before it: But if, because this first Year of *Guei lie wang* is taken for an Epoque, it were placed opposite to the first Year of the Cycle, it would occasion an Anachronism of fifty-three Years. A capital Point, to which those, who intend to use this Chronological Table, cannot give too much Attention.

In a Word, since History has given this first Year of *Guei lie wang* the Name of *Pin chin*, it is not allowed to give it any other in the Table; and one is obliged to refer it therein to the Year of the Cycle that bears that Name, under the Penalty of being guilty of confounding Time, and puzzling Chronology.

It is in this Arrangement that all the Artifice of this new Table consists. And this Point once well understood,

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\* The blank Columns at the End are left to put down the future Emperors as they shall succeed.

derstood, is a Key which gives Entrance into all the rest.

The first Year of *Guei lie wang* being placed at the fifty-third Year of the Cycle, the second Year of this Prince will necessarily answer the fifty-fourth of the Cycle, the eighth of the same Prince the sixtieth and last of the same Cycle; and of Consequence the ninth of *Guei lie wang* will be the first of the ensuing Cycle; and so of the others in a continued Series of twenty-one Centuries down to the present Time.

As all the Columns of the Table are parallel to the Cycle, so they are equal to it, and contain sixty Years, as that does. Hence flows an easy Method to know in a Moment the Interval of Time elapsed between any two Years whatsoever of the Table: For it is but multiplying by sixty the Number of entire Columns between the two Years whose Interval is sought, adding thereto what remains in the two Columns on the Right and Left, until you reach the two Years in question. Every one knows that Multiplication by sixty is very easily performed by multiplying by six, and adding a (0) Cypher to the Product.

By this Method a Moment's Attention will make a judicious Reader know that there are 424 Years elapsed since the Epoque of *Guei lie wang* to the Year wherein *Denis le Petit* places the Birth of our Saviour: For this Year has been marked on the *Latin* Table, to be as its Center, and serve the *European Litterati* for a fixed Point, to regulate their Calculations on. Supposing *Petavius's* Doctrine true, this *Dionysian* Æra is one Year before the vulgar Æra, which last should be preferred as being most in Use, if we had not

not considered that it coincides with the first Year of the Emperor *Ping Ti*. And in regard to the Scantiness of Space, it could not be engraved therein, without omitting the Name of this Emperor, which it was necessary to preserve.

But if on one Hand the Epoque of *Guei lie wang* placed in the fifty-third<sup>year</sup> of the Cycle, and once well comprehended, becomes a Key that opens the Knowledge of the Table, and develops its System ; on the other, the Characteristic Names of the sixty Years which compose the Cycle, do by their Connection with the Years of the Emperors determine the precise Time of Incidents. Hence arises Clearness and Certainty in the *Chinese* Chronology ; for these Characteristics contribute to the Discovery of Errors, which either the Ignorance and Neglect of Copyists and Printers, or the Want of Attention in Authors, often introduce into Chronology.

For Example: In the Chronological Table of the *Chinese* Monarchy, printed at the End of the Work, whose Title is, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, it is said, that *Chi hoang Ti* \*, in the twenty-fourth Year of his Reign, built, or (to speak more accurately) finished the great Wall ; and consequently the burning of the Books is placed in the same Emperor's twenty-fifth Year. Now according to History, the great Wall was finished in the Year of the Cycle called (20) *Ting hai*, a Name that can agree only

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\* Vide Monarchiæ finicæ tabulam chronologicam, p. 24 & 25. Chi hoang Ti, anno Imperii 24<sup>o</sup> murum celeberrimum 400 & ultra leucarum extruxit contra Tartarorum eruptiones : anno 25<sup>o</sup> libros omnes præter medicos & judicarios cremari jussit.

(Chi should be pronounced like our English She.)

with the thirty-third Year of this Emperor's Reign. As to the burning of the Books, it is marked in History in the Year (21) *You Tse*, which necessarily answers the thirty-fourth Year of this evil Prince.

Thus these Characteristic Names of the Years that compose the Cycle, are as a Touch-stone, that is of wonderful Service for distinguishing Truth from Falshood, and re-establishing Order when disturbed.

This Cycle removed, the Years of Emperors might be very easily confounded, by augmenting or diminishing their Number.

When an Emperor is newly come to the Throne, if the first Year of his Reign be reckoned that, wherein his Predecessor died, it is placing two Years in one; because according to the *Chinese* Custom the Year, wherein an Emperor ends his Reign, is wholly attributed to him, though he died in the Beginning of the first Month; and his Successor is held to reign only from the Beginning of the ensuing Year.

Yet this Custom, though very common, is not so universal, but that some Emperors have derogated from it. The *Tartarian* Emperor *Tchang hoang Ti*, Founder of the Dynasty now reigning, caused the Year, wherein *Hoai Tsong* had murdered himself, to be taken for the first Year of his Reign, which was the seventeenth and last of this last Emperor of the *Mings*.

If, according to Custom, this seventeenth and last Year of *Hoai Tsong* were distinguished from the first of *Tchang hoang Ti*, it would be making two Years of one, which would confound Time.

Resume the Cycle, apply it to the Years of the Emperors, and these Errors will appear of themselves. You will

will see that the Year wherein *Hoai Tsong* died was called (22) *Kia Chin* ; that that, wherein *Tchang hoang Ti* began his Reign, was likewise called *Kia Chin* : therefore they are the same Year. If it were made two, the Mistake would be found at first Sight, and should be corrected.

Under the (23) *Tven* those occidental *Tartars*, whose Domination over *China* began in the Year 1280, and ended in 1368, the Emperor *Wen Tsong* died in 1333 : *Ning Tsong* his Successor reigned but some few Months, and *Chun Ti*, who succeeded *Ning Tsong*, mounted the Throne towards the End of the same Year. Three Years may be easily made of this one, in order to place the three Princes just named. But whoever makes use of the Cycle need not fear the Mistake. The Deaths of the two first Emperors, and the Accession of the third to the Throne, are three Incidents, which History refers to the Year of the Cycle named (24) *Quei yeou*. And this Characteristic Name is a Link that binds them all together, so that it is no longer possible to separate them.

These Examples suffice : It is easy to comprehend, that if during Interregnums or Anarchies, the Time were lengthened or abridged, or if it were confounded during Civil Wars carried on between two clashing Families disputing the Sovereign Power, the Application of the Cycle would set all right.

The Names which mark the Years of the Cycle are then a certain Rule to redress the Errors of unskilful Chronologers. They resemble a Torch which gives Light in a dark or difficult Path. The Learned, who will know to set a just Value on these Characteristics, will

will be pleased with them, and will perhaps prefer them for Use to the Consular Reckonings, wherein are found so many discouraging Interruptions. And if Medals have somewhat more enticing and splendid in them, there is a certain Simplicity always uniform in the Continuation of the Years of the Cycle necessarily followed, which leads the Mind to Truth by an easy Road, without much Ornament, Expence or Enquiry after Monuments.

Another Property of this new Table, no less remarkable or useful than the foregoing is, that this Table lays before the Eye all the Names of the particular Epoques assumed by the Emperors of *China* for near two thousand Years. For *Han uou Ti*, the first who took this Sort of Epoque, began his Reign one hundred and forty Years before *Jesus Christ*.

No body, to the best of our Knowledge, has given *Europe* a sufficient Account of the Nature of these Epoques, though they are very well worth explaining. The Emperors of *China* have a particular Custom, little known in *Europe*, which, if Care be not taken, would infallibly spread Darknefs and Confusion over Chronology and History. It is not allowed to pronounce the proper Name of any Emperor during his Life, which is looked on in some Measure as inflexible. This Respect continues even after their Deaths; for then it is not by their proper Names they are mentioned, but are consecrated (if we may use the Term) by a Surname, which is a Sort of Character of Canonization. And under this Title are they received into the Burying-place of their Ancestors, and afterwards ranked in History. But in their Life-time, to supply  
 2 the

the Name that dare not be pronounced, they themselves, in Imitation of *Han wou Ti* already mentioned, choose and determine a Term that serves for an Epoque to the Incidents of their Reign. This Term we call Epoque, because it is from it the Years of Emperors are reckoned, and to it is referred every thing that falls out during these Years. Examples will make these Things easy to comprehend. The famous Emperor who died December 20, 1722, after a Reign of sixty-one Years, had the Letter (25) *Hiuen* for his proper Name. During his Reign, this Letter was not to be put into any publick Memorial, Book or Writing. The Letter (23) *Tuen* was substituted in its Room, because it would be a kind of Prophanation to employ for common Use the Name of a Prince, who stiled himself (25) *Son of Heaven*.

After his Death his fourth Son, who succeeded him gave him for Title of Canonization, the glorious Surname of (27) *Ching Tsou gin hoang Ti*; as much as to say, *the holy Ancestor, the august, good and merciful Emperor*\*. It is under this Surname that he has been interred among his Ancestors, and it is under the same that History will make mention of him for the future.

Upon his ascending the Throne after a Father who had conquered *China*, he assumed for the Epoque of his Years the two Letters *Kang hi*, the Sense whereof is *Solid Peace*, or *lasting and glorious Tranquillity*. Thus because in the †thirty-eighth Year of his Reign

\* This Character Gin, which I have translated gracious and merciful, signifies Charity: it also expresses sometimes the Conjunction of all Virtues: and it may bear that Sense here.

The Character Hoang (27 \*) when analysed, is found to be composed of Tse, which signifies of himself, and Wang, which translated is Reigning.

† In the thirty-fifth.

Reign he conquered by his Generals a Prince of *Tartary* named *Kaldan*; this Victory is said to be gained the thirty-eighth Year of *Kang hi*, or of *the lasting and glorious Tranquillity*.

The Letters (28) *Tn Tchín* compose the Name of his fourth Son, who now reigns; wherefore the Use of these Letters is and will be prohibited until a new Government. As to the Title of Canonization, by which this Prince is to be recorded in History, it will not be given him till after his Death. But upon his Accession to the Crown, as he had a great Number of Brothers and Nephews, he took for Epoque of his Years the two Letters (29) *Tong Tchíng*, which signify *Direct Concord*; to give to understand, that if his Brothers and Nephews pay him the Respect and Submission they owe him, he would treat them with Kindness.

The Empress his Mother died some few Months after he began his Reign; so the Death of this Princess will be marked in History in the first Year of *Tong Tchíng*, or of the *Direct Concord*. Thus will all other Incidents be fixed by the Years of the *Direct Concord* in which they will happen.

It is plain from these Examples, that the Names of Emperors, and the Names of their Epoques are essentially different, and that those of the Epoques comprehend very instructive Meanings, the understanding which must be of great Service to the clearing up of History.

But there is great Danger lest the Name of an Epoque be made the Name of an Emperor, which would double the Number of Emperors, supposing  
even



even that each of them had taken but one Epoque during his Reign.

No *European* Writer, that we know, has faithfully given them all : But this Table presents us with an exact and entire Series of them. And yet it is a thing much to be wished for, to have a faithful Explanation of them ; a Work which would engage one in a Review of the whole History, but will be undertaken nevertheless, if we find room to hope, that it will not be disagreeable to the Learned.

The Inconveniency is, that a great Number of Emperors have often changed these Names of Epoques. This Inconveniency is not found in the Dynasty now reigning ; but in the more ancient it is a very common Disorder. *Han wou Ti*, the first that introduced the Use of Epoques, assumed, during his fifty-four Years Reign, to the Number of eleven very different Epoques. Several others have followed his Example, which cannot but cause a great deal of Confusion in History, if one happened to imagine, as it is natural enough to do, that these Names of Epoques are the Names of so many Emperors.

It was of Importance to clear up these Things thoroughly ; this the Table does : and to avoid Mistake, Care has been taken to have the Emperor's Names or Titles engraved in large Characters, and those of the Epoques in small Letters. Moreover, when an Emperor, not content with one Epoque, has taken several, Notice is given of it by a Star placed on one Side of the first.

In short, to leave nothing conjectural, as often as a Reader considering this Table, shall find two separate

Ranks of Figures opposite to one another in a Series of several Lodges, denoting different Numbers, he is to remember, that these Figures mark the Years of Emperors of two Families, which dispute the Empire, one of which being soon to perish, will give room to the other to ascend the Throne. The Column found under the Title *San Koue*, that is to say, *the three Kingdoms*, is an Example hereof. This Title of three Kingdoms denotes the Time when *China* was divided into three different Parts; and the Column, on the Top of which is found that Title, in the Order of the Dynasties is the twelfth, reckoning from the first at the Reader's right Hand inclusively. We see in the forty-third Lodge that the first Year of the Epoque *Tai ho* assumed by the Emperor *Ming Ti*, of the Family called *Guei*, answers to the fifth Year of the Epoque *Kien hing* assumed by *Heou Tchu*, Emperor of the *Han's*: the second Year of the Epoque *Tai ho* answers to the sixth of the Epoque *Kien hing*, and so of the rest that follow. The Reason is, that the Empire was at that Time torn in Pieces by bloody Wars: The *Guei's* were getting the upper Hand, and the *Han's* very near their Ruin.

As to a great Number of Lodges that have but one or two Figures, without any Account of History, they are unpleasing Blanks, which however the *Chinese* matter not, satisfied to have an exact Series of their Emperors Years in these Lodges. But such Blanks may be filled by inserting some considerable Incidents of History, as some few have already been in the *Latin* Edition, *viz.* the building of the great Wall, the burning of the Books, the *Christian* Æra,  
the

the Introduction of the *Christian* Religion into *China*, the Appearance of a Star seen in the Heavens upwards of seventy Days \*, the true Year in which our Saviour was born, &c. If this Addition please the Learned, it will be no difficult Matter to add several other Incidents unknown in *Europe*.

This is what occurs to be said for perfectly understanding the new Chronological Table of the *Chinese* History. This Exposition will be of Service to such as think the *Latin* Instructions at the Head of the Table insufficient; not that this Table has of itself ought that can puzzle a Person ever so little accustomed to this Kind of Study. The *Chinese* Youth play with it, and see the Matter in question at first Sight: But it is an Object hitherto unseen in *Europe*; and that is sufficient to startle certain Readers, who, though Men of Sense, frequently seek Mysteries, where there are none; and then Perspicuity itself becomes Obscurity. For Persons of this Character the best Way would be to consider the Table for some Moments with one, who has already comprehended its Use. A little Instruction by Word of Mouth is better than a thousand Commentaries: The Eye does a great deal, but the Ear is much more efficacious for infusing Knowledge into our Minds without Labour. When these two principal Senses are united, and applied in Concert, Difficulties which looked frightful, are seen to vanish.

To conclude, it is Use only can make one sufficiently sensible of all the Advantages of this Table.

L I I 2

Those

\* *The Chinese say of this Star, that it was a Sign of Renewal in the World.*

Those who have no Inclination to know what has passed in *China*, who read not its History nor Accounts, who study not its Religion, Arts, Sciences, Government, nor Policy, have no Need of this Table ; but whoever applies himself to the Study of the different Articles just mentioned, may be assured that he will draw such Helps hence as Experience alone can enable him to set a just Value on. For at first Glance of the Eye one will see therein the Beginning and the End of all the Reigns, the Duration of the Dynasties, the Succession of the *Chinese* Monarchy ; and that one will therein discover, as in a faithful Looking-Glass, the Faults of Chronology dispersed in several Authors : But the principal Advantage is, that this Table, conformably with the most valued History, fixes the true Epoque of the *Chinese* Empire to four Centuries or thereabouts before the Birth of our Saviour. By the true Epoque of the Empire understand not the Beginnings of the Nation, which it is credible (as we have remarked before) remount to the next Ages after the Deluge ; but the Beginning of the Monarchy, which is the Time, when the Incidents that happened in this Nation, appearing grounded on certain Proofs, deserve the Credit of learned Men. This important Point once cleared up, ought to put an End to the Disputes of the Learned on the fabulous Antiquity of *China*. Excellent Wits, capable of greater Things, will henceforth disdain to employ their Lucubrations in such frivolous Scrutinies.

The Year Letters.	The hour Letters.		
1. 甲 <i>Kiu.</i>	1. 子 <i>Tse.</i>	(1) 甲 <i>Kia.</i> 子 <i>Tse.</i>	(5) 黃 <i>hoang.</i> 帝 <i>Ti</i>
2. 乙 <i>y.</i>	2. 丑 <i>Tcheou.</i>	(2) 乙 <i>y.</i> 卯 <i>mao.</i>	(6) 甲 <i>Kia.</i>
3. 丙 <i>Ping.</i>	3. 寅 <i>yn.</i>	(3) 始 <i>Chu</i>	(7) 乙 <i>y.</i>
4. 丁 <i>Ting.</i>	4. 卯 <i>mao.</i>	皇 <i>hoang.</i>	(8) 關 <i>o.</i>
5. 戊 <i>Uou.</i>	5. 辰 <i>Chin.</i>	帝 <i>Ti</i>	逢 <i>Fong.</i>
6. 巳 <i>Ki.</i>	6. 巳 <i>Se.</i>	(4) 庚 <i>Keng.</i>	(9) 施 <i>Tcheou.</i>
7. 庚 <i>Keng.</i>	7. 午 <i>ou.</i>	辰 <i>Chin.</i>	蒙 <i>Mong.</i>
8. 辛 <i>Sin.</i>	8. 未 <i>Wei.</i>		(10) 丙 <i>Ping.</i>
9. 壬 <i>Gin.</i>	9. 申 <i>Chin.</i>		
10. 癸 <i>Kuei.</i>	10. 酉 <i>yeou</i>		
	11. 戌 <i>Sio.</i>		
	12. 亥 <i>hai.</i>		

(5) ing.	(11) Ieru. 彙	(13) 生 其 苾 黃 以 物 本 子 物 始 之 原 子 之 也 初 昔 者 所			
(6) z.	(12) Tse. 子				
(7)	ou. 子				
8)	(14) Kouen. 困	(20) Ting. 丁	(25) hiuen. 玄	(28) yn. 胤	
	Tun. 敦	hai. 志	(26) Cæli. 天	Tchin. 禎	
7.	(15) Tun. 敦	(21) Uou. 戊	filius. 子	(29) yong. 証	
(9)	Tsang. 耕	Tse. 子	(27) Ching. 聖	Tching. 正	
rou.	(16) yang. 羊	(22) Kin. 甲	Tsou. 祖	(*) Tse. 白	
rg.	(17) Tsang. 斗	Chin. 申	gin. 仁	à se. 王	
10)	(18) ou 于	(23) yuen. 元	hoang. 皇	Wang. 王	
g.	(19) Ping 而	(24) quet. 癸	Ti. 帝	Regnans. 王	
	Chin. 辰	yeou. 酉			

The Year Letters.		The hour Letters.															
1. 甲	Kia.	1. 子	Tse.	甲	Kia.	黃	hoang.	彙	Tseu.	以	黃	其	生	以	黃	其	生
2. 乙	y.	2. 丑	Tcheou.	子	Tse.	帝	Ti	兆	Tchao.	始	物	子	木	始	物	子	木
3. 丙	Ping.	3. 寅	yn.	乙	y.	甲	Kia.	子	Tse.	也	之	子	原	也	之	子	原
4. 丁	Ting.	4. 卯	mao.	卯	mao.	乙	y.	午	ou.		所	者	昔		所	者	昔
5. 戊	Uou.	5. 辰	Chin.	始	Chu	皇	hoang.	困	Kouen.	丁	Ting.	玄	hiuen.	丁	Ting.	玄	hiuen.
6. 巳	Ki.	6. 巳	Se.	皇帝	Ti	闕	o.	敦	Tun.	志	hai.	子	Cali.	志	hai.	子	Cali.
7. 庚	Keng.	7. 午	ou.	庚	Keng.	逢	Fong.	敦	Tun.	戊	Uou.	子	filius.	敦	Tun.	子	filius.
8. 辛	Sin.	8. 未	Wei.	庚辰	Chin.	施	Tcheou.	祥	Tsang.	子	Tse.	聖	Ching.	祥	Tsang.	子	Tse.
9. 壬	Gin.	9. 申	Chin.			蒙	Mong.	羊	yang.	甲	Kia.	祖	Tsou.	羊	yang.	甲	Kia.
10. 癸	Kuei.	10. 酉	yeou.			丙	Ping.	斗	Tsang.	申	Chin.	仁	gin.	斗	Tsang.	申	Chin.
		11. 戌	Sio.					于	ou.	元	Yuen.	皇	hoang.	于	ou.	元	Yuen.
		12. 亥	hai.					丙辰	Chin.	癸	quei.	帝	Ti.	丙辰	Chin.	癸	quei.
										酉	yeou.						